U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

April 8, 2005

News Release

ICE ARRESTS ALLEGED ILLEGAL ALIEN SMUGGLER
Suspect Conspired to Smuggle Illegal Aliens from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico- A 35-year-old citizen of the Dominican Republic linked to human smuggling was arrested here yesterday as a result of a 9-month Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigation.

ICE agents arrested Altagracia Ramos-Paolino for her alleged involvement in smuggling illegal aliens from the Dominican Republic to the continental United States (CONUS) using Puerto Rico as a gateway.

Ramos-Paolino attempted to smuggle four previously deported aggravated felons through Luis Munoz Marin International Airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico; however, elements of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) prevented the illegal re-entry.

Ramos-Paolino is alleged to having provided the illegal aliens with counterfeit driver's licenses and social security cards. She was also responsible for purchasing the airline tickets to facilitate their illegal entry.

"We will continue our investigative efforts in dismantling alien smuggling organizations whose only goal is to profit at the expense of others, said Lydia St. John-Mellado, acting special agent-in-charge of the Puerto Rico office. "Smugglers who think that Puerto Rico is an easy gateway to the continental United States are sorely mistaken. Smugglers will be found, and will face the consequences to the fullest extent of the law."

Ramos-Paolina is in U.S. Marshals custody awaiting the outcome of her case. The U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico has accepted the case for prosecution.

The ICE investigation into this smuggling ring is ongoing.

www.ice.gov

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.